

Frenchmen and Hanoi Defector

BY HOLGER JENSEN
SAIGON, May 11 (Tuesday) — Soviet, Chinese, Cuban, North Korean and French military strategists are advising Communist-led forces fighting in South Viet Nam, a high-ranking defector from Hanoi claimed today.

He said the Frenchmen were former prisoners of war from the French Indochina conflict who were not repatriated under the 1954 Geneva accords.

The defector is Dr. Dang Tan, 42, a former official in North Viet Nam's Defense Ministry. He was sent to South Viet Nam as minister of public health in a proposed revolutionary government.

Saw Them Personally

He said he personally saw foreign Communist advisers at rest stations on the Ho Chi Minh Trail when he traveled south thru Laos in 1967.

Tan said he established a guerrilla hospital in South Viet Nam's Plaihu Province and in two years saw "four or five groups of foreign military strategists, each numbering three to five men."

They always carried arms, usually wore black pajamas and were invariably accompanied by large security forces of North Vietnamese soldiers, he said.

First Interview

Tan spoke to the Associated Press thru an interpreter in his first interview since his defection Sept. 26, 1969. He later appeared at a press conference. It was not explained why he had been kept under wraps by Saigon for more than 1½ years.

Tan's revelations could help to explain recurring reports of Caucasians seen fighting with Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units. These never have been proved conclusively because United States and South Vietnamese forces never have found any Caucasian bodies among enemy dead.

Tan was asked if some of the foreign advisers might have been American prisoners of war. He replied: "No. Hanoi propaganda says American GIs are fighting with the VC-NVA, but I have never seen this with

my own eyes." VC-NVA are the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army.

Speak Own Tongues

"The men I saw were Russians, Chinese, Cubans, North Koreans and French," Tan said. "They came south to study the battlefields, to study the situation and see how they could help. I have seen them deep in South Vietnamese territory. I have heard them speaking their foreign languages."

The slight, bespectacled medical man joined the Viet Minh in his native Quang Ngai Province at the age of 16 and became a Communist three years later. His membership was sponsored by Pham Kiet, now vice minister of public security in Hanoi, and Nguyen Don, now vice minister of national defense.

Both sponsors were Viet Minh generals in the fight against the French, and Tan served as personal assistant to each commander from 1945 to 1950.

Tan Studies Chinese

At that time a Communist



Dr. Dang Tan

China war was considered a possibility and Tan was selected for interpreter training. He studied Chinese for a year in Binh Dinh Province, but plans for Chinese participation in an offensive were scrapped and he was allowed to move to Hanoi for medical training.

Tan married another southerner, Nguyen Thi Minh, who was a senior employee in Hanoi's Finance Ministry when he saw her last in 1957.

The Geneva agreement ending the French Indochina war was signed while Tan was still studying to be a doctor. Nevertheless, he was appointed chief of the medical staff of the Defense Ministry's POW exchange section.

Many Not Repatriated

"Many prisoners were not repatriated," he said. "Some married Vietnamese and did not want to go home. Some volunteered to stay and study our Communist system. Others were needed by the regime and were asked to stay."

"They were asked, yes, but some were forced to stay."

Tan added that a special North Vietnamese army unit of former POWs was formed in 1955 and 1956. It contained about 300 French, Algerian and Moroccan soldiers, he said.

Tan attributed his defection to gradual disillusionment. "No one reason but a lot of little reasons over a long period of time. I just began to feel Communism was outdated, not a suitable system of government for a country."

On Sept. 3, 1969, Ho Chi Minh died. Tan defected three weeks later.

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Defector doubts all POWs will be free

SAIGON, Tues — A Vietnamese medical doctor who rose through the ranks of the Communist Party until he defected in 1969 said today he doubted that all American prisoners of war would be permitted to return home eventually.

"Evidence of this is that not all of the French prisoners of war have been released to the present day," said Dr. Dan Tan, 42, who was born in central South Vietnam and began his career as a guerrilla fighter when the Viet Minh were fighting the French and Japanese in 1945.

Tan, speaking at a government-sponsored news conference said: "Instead of according these POWs even a modicum of humane treatment and of attempting to sincerely solve this problem in a civilized manner, North Vietnam considers these POWs as bargaining tools, as commodities to be used to help achieve North Vietnam's political

objectives.

Tan, whose first dealing with POWs was in late 1954 when he served as chief of the medical section of a POW exchange committee in the French period, said he has knowledge that various ministries within the North Vietnamese defence system vie with each for the "exploitation of American POWs for propaganda purposes."

"The Central Committee of North Vietnam considers that American POWs must be intensively exploited, both for strategic, intelligence and for propaganda purposes."

North Vietnam blatantly violates the international Geneva Convention of 1949 for the humane treatment of POWs by permitting other Communist Bloc countries, including the Soviet Union, Communist China, Cuba and others, to exploit the American POWs.

Tan said Hanoi will keep the US prisoners because "they will be of

help to them."

"The Communists believe the POWs are very competent and will be useful to them in the future. They are trying to use their talents now. They will not release all of them now or in the future. Those POWs will not have a chance to go home."

In an interview with the Associated Press several days ago, Tan claimed that Soviet, Chinese, Cuban, North Korean and French "military strategists" were advising the enemy forces in South Vietnam. He said the Frenchmen were former prisoners of war who should have been repatriated in 1954.

Under questioning, Tan estimated there were still 300 French still held in captivity in the North. He alleged he had seen them working on road and maintenance projects in North Vietnam as late as 1965.

"I am concerned that the people and the Government of the United States will be completely misled by their hopes that the American POWs will be permitted to return to their homeland," Tan said. "Evidence of this is that not all of the French POWs have been released even to the present day. The reason for this is that North Vietnam wished to keep secret the inhumane treatment it had accorded to some of these French POWs and because others died at the hands of their North Vietnamese interrogators."

Under questioning, Tan said he felt certain many American and South Vietnamese POWs would be released eventually, but not necessarily all of them.

Tan said he saw American POWs in a parade in Hanoi in 1967 and later the same year saw Americans in South Vietnam being marched north. North Vietnam has released the names of 368 American prisoners they say they are holding. — UPI, AP

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